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Don't be Rejected, How Can We Help Authors, Reviewers and Editors?

Report of a Symposium for Editors Publishers and Others with an Interest in Scientific Publication, Held in Boston on Wednesday, 11 March 2015, during the Annual Meeting of the International Association for Dental Research

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Abstract

This satellite symposium was the fifth in a series for editors, publishers, reviewers and all those with an interest in scientific publishing. It was held on Wednesday, 11 March 2015 at the IADR meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. The symposium attracted more than 210 attendees. The symposium placed an emphasis on strategies to ensure that papers are accepted by peer reviewed journals. The speaker, representing the Journal of Dental Research gave a history of peer review and explained how to access material to advise new authors. The speaker from India outlined the problems that occur when there is no culture for dental research and it is given a low priority in dental education. He outlined

remedies. The speaker from SAGE publications described the help that publishers and editors can provide authors. The final speaker suggested that in developing countries it was essential to create alliances with dental researchers in developed countries and that local conferences to which external speakers were invited, stimulated research both in terms of quantity and quality. A wide ranging discussion then took place.

Keywords: Dental, Editing, Reviewing, Journals, Publishing, Research

Welcome

The Chairman - Dr Kenneth Eaton-welcomed the audience to the symposium.He set the scene with the words "I am sure that many of us in the room have been rejected many times by journals and felt quite bad about it and there is an ongoing issue there to try and help everyone concerned in writing and publishing scientific literature to minimise the number of times this happens." He went on,"so what is the aim of the symposium today? It is to start to answer the question posed at the end of the previous symposia for editors, held during the IADR Seattle (1) and Cape Town (2) meetings and this was how can authors, reviewers, editors and publishers collaborate to improve the quality of papers submitted to journals? What is on the programme for today? After this introduction the first speaker will be Dr Nicola Innes from the University of Dundee who is an Associate Editor of the Journal of Dental Research. Nicola will address the topic of how to improve reviews and that is a big issue in itself. I think that in the future we can have a symposium purely on that topic. Then we have Professor DrS.M.Balajifrom India, who has been doing sterling work particularly with the Indian Journal of Dental Research. He will present the topic of how to approach deans and teachers to help. Courtney Pugh from SAGE publications will talk about how publishers can help and then finally Professor EinoHonkala, who is currently at the University of Kuwait but is originally from Finland. Eino has spent several years working in Africa and the Middle East. He will talk about how to manage proposed changes. Then it is over to you, what ideas have you got, how can we take these things forward?

Professor Nicola Innes - Associate Editor, Journal of Dental Research

Good afternoon everyone and thank you very much Ken for the invitation to speak here on the subject of how can we improve reviews, a very big question that I know we probably all hold dear. Peer review has been going on for a very long time in some form and so Wikipedia, a very un-peer reviewed source of course, tells us that in 1665 the Royal Society of London first started what we would recognise, even slightly, as a peer review process and that has obviously developed very much over the last few hundred years and decades. However, it wasn't really until as recently as 1967 that

Nature first began the peer review process, very much as we would understand and recognise it as now. I am going to talk a little bit about the peer review process and what we are aiming for when we carry out peer review, what are our peer reviewers like and then I am going to talk about how we might improve the quality of our reviews through the peer review process, about the idea of reciprocity, bottom up approaches which I know is going to be dealt with a little bit more later as well, training resources and other newer things that we might consider to try and reduce research wastage. I will suggest some innovative solutions and how to maximise the talents of those that are already peer reviewing for us. Finally, I hope to give you a little summary and maybe some suggestions, rather than recommendations, that we might want to think about with regard to improving peer review.

Of course our aim in peer review is to select the best research that we can to bring to the attention of our readership. We, as editors make use, great use of our peer reviewers to give us information on the validity, the significance and to some extent the originality of the papers that have been submitted to our journals. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) defines peer review as an unbiased, independent, critical assessment by experts who are not part of the editorial staff. This externality is very important and we know that it is an intrinsic part, fundamental to the scholarly work that is carried out. Everyone will of course be very familiar with the situation in which researchers who produce research, submit it to the journal and it then bounces back and forwards between peer reviewers and the authors who submitted the work until finally, hopefully, the work is fit for publication. Peer reviewers lie at the very heart of this process, but who are our peer reviewers? What training have they had and why do they review? Lastly, what influences their decisions to say yes when they are invited to review?

I investigated these questions and found that in 2011, in the UK, the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee held an inquiry into peer review to look at how appropriate it was and how fit for purpose(3). The committee sought written and oral evidence from a wide range of experts and associations. In their submission, the British Medical Journal wrote: "Many biomedical editors are doctors or scientists with little relevant experience or training before taking on the role, so publishers

and journal owners should point new editors to such guidance and support them while they learn.” I think that this reflects the picture with peer reviewers as well. When I looked for what kind of guidance is available for editors, I found quite a lot. There are resources held on the ICMJE website (4). The World Association of Medical Editors (5) and the Council of Science Editors (6) also have resources as does the Committee on Publication Ethics (7), a very useful source of information. But what about the peer reviewers? It is most likely that they have had no formal training in peer reviewing and it is widely acknowledged that peer reviewers tend to learn on the job. They come from very diverse backgrounds and don’t always come up through a system where they have received tutoring from more senior people who, themselves, have peer reviewed. They often come in from the side at different points. Some of them have a very narrow focus and some of them a very broad focus from their work, which all lends itself to differing perspectives when they start to peer review. *Sense about Science* carried out a large survey of researchers and out of 4,000 researchers from biomedical and science backgrounds, they found that the vast majority, 84% of them, felt that without peer review there would be no control of scientific communication (8). So, although we all know that there are many flaws within the peer review system it is still acknowledged as being probably the best that we can achieve at the moment and is generally fit for purpose.

So why do reviewers review and what influences a decision to say yes when we invite them to carry out a review? I had a look at the Publishing Research Consortium's recently commissioned survey (9) that was carried out in 2009 where they looked at this very question (10). They found, interestingly, as many of us would expect, that it was mostly for altruistic reasons and the peer reviewers felt that 91% of them in fact agreed that it was important they play their part as a member of the academic community. Three quarters enjoyed being able to review and improve a paper and also enjoyed seeing it ahead of publication and they wanted to reciprocate the benefits that they themselves had received by being part of the peer review system, when they were publishing their own work. What factors increased their likelihood of saying yes when invited to peer review? Well, free subscription, acknowledgement in the journal and payment in kind were by far the most important factors. So this idea of some kind of reward for effort was acknowledged as influential.

I also wondered if there was any way that we could work through the peer review process that most of us use currently, without too much of a strain in the system, to improve the quality of our final manuscripts. Coboet al. (2011) (11) looked at this exact question. They randomised sequential papers that were going through the peer review process into two groups. The first group of papers underwent the usual peer review process but the second group, in addition to the usual peer review process, were sent reporting guidelines appropriate for each type of study and asked to use them to guide their peer review. When the review was based additionally on the reporting guidelines, the manuscript quality did improve, but the observed effect was much smaller than the investigators had thought it would be. Interestingly, again I am sure that most of us are familiar with this, the problem wasn't that the authors didn't want to address the comments from the peer reviewer in line with the guidelines, it was that the fundamental research, carried out in the first place, hadn't had the research rigour allowing the authors to take account of some of the points in the guidelines. For example, maybe they hadn't dealt with allocation adequately or at all, so, although it was flagged by the reviewers as needing to be addressed, what happened in the research couldn't be changed at the write-up stage.

Moving on to this idea of reciprocation, our peer reviewers have quite a lot of pressure placed on them especially those who produce very high quality reviews and we have a limited number of them. The idea of reciprocity is perhaps something that we need to make a little bit more visible. When somebody publishes a paper they are actually asked then to give back to the journal and review one in return or perhaps more than one, because of course for every time we peer review a paper it takes three or four reviewers to contribute to that process.

If we consider other ways to improve the quality of our reviews I think that we have acknowledged there are often advantages from using experienced reviewers but we really need to think about "bottom upping" our approach to peer reviewers. I know that this is going to be dealt with much more later when we talk about what we can do at earlier stages. However, for now, I just want to make the point that, in common with the USA, in the UK our General Dental Council in its guidance for undergraduates has explicitly stated that our undergraduate students should leave dental school being

able to explain, evaluate and apply the principles of an evidence based approach to learning (12). In the UK we have tried to put together an evidence based dentistry teachers group and I bring this up because it has been obvious from that process that there is real will to work together and avoid duplicating effort, when we try and produce resources and materials. I think that is something that we should bear in mind when we consider what we can do within our journals in creating training resources for our peer reviewers.

These are some of the existing information and training resources that are available that we might wish to point some of our peer reviewers towards, some of the newer ones perhaps. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (13) is more geared towards clinicians actually appraising evidence and making decisions about whether the evidence in a paper or a systematic review can be applied to their particular population. The World Association of Medical Editors (14) and the Publishing Research Consortium (15) also have resources available that we can point people towards to assist with appraising papers in a systematic way. Sense About Science (16) is another excellent website with a number of different tools of interest to peer reviewers. It explains a little bit more about how the system works and what is expected of them. Finally, British Medical Journal has quite a nice resource for training materials.

The British Medical Journal has an extensive training resource for potential reviewers (17). There are a number of objectives that new reviewers are guided towards. Objective 1 is to inform participants on the state of peer review research and there is a Powerpoint presentation that takes the reviewer through a number of different aspects of peer review. Objective 2 is to make clear what constitutes a good review and again there is a Powerpoint presentation that can just be looked at. Objective 3 aims to help participants to understand what matters to editors about reviews. There is then a series of reviews and the learner is asked to reflect on them and to reflect back on the previous Powerpoint presentation to try and bring out what they think are the positive and negative points about the reviews. Then there is a commentary on that. Finally, Objective 4 gives participants help in producing a good review and here there are a number of papers available, with the option of trying to produce a review and then compare it to those of other people who have reviewed the same paper.

Moving onto some other new things, to think about. There is an issue called “cascade” or “water-falling” of peer reviews. This is where, following rejection of a paper and it being submitted to another journal, the reviews that have already been produced actually follow the paper to help inform an editor about the decision they might make. This reduces wastage within the peer review system. It might be especially useful when we have papers that are submitted to our journal that we think may or may not be a good fit (rather than poor quality). When these papers go for peer review and the peer reviewers come back and say that there are a few things that could be improved, but on the whole they don’t really think that the manuscript is a good fit for the journal and suggest submitting it to somewhere else. These reviews are useful and people have often spent a lot of time producing them but they get lost. Cascading peer reviews doesn’t happen, as far as I’m aware, very commonly in Bio-medical journals but it is more common in the Social Sciences.

Another thing we should consider is how can we get academic credit for these peer reviewers who spend significant time and energy carrying out the peer reviews for us. Ken was kind enough to send me a link to Publons (18), a reasonably recent resource that has been developed. Publons is a website where people who carry out peer reviews can have it registered and logged and gain academic credit for it. It works by the person submitting, to Publons, the ‘thank you’ or acknowledgement letter they receive from the editor that credits them or that says that they have carried out that peer review. The credit is then placed on their Publons account and they can use that when they go for perhaps promotion at a later stage or on their CV. It is a record or a log of the work that they have carried out.

I also asked a number of people who carry out peer review for us for the Journal of Dental Research what they thought might be useful and make reviewing easier for them and this comment in particular struck me; ‘I feel that editors might come back to reviewers more often to see what they like or did not like about the review, especially helpful for not that experienced reviewers.’ I am not sure that it is something that will ever actually happen, I know that on an individual basis occasionally we go back to reviewers to thank them. It is very difficult to go back to a reviewer to say what you didn’t like about a review when you know that they have gone to a lot of trouble to produce it, regardless of whether it fits in with your idea of a good or bad review and it possibly wont endear them to your

journal. It is an option, and something that we might consider formalising as part of the process. At the Journal of Dental Research we sent reviewers the final decisions of other reviewers comments because that allows people to see whether they are fitting in with the general perspective that people have and observe good reviews. I'm not sure how common that is for other journals. We of course have the option for annual joint meetings with reviewers either at the IADR or other forums and I know that certainly goes down well here.

So, finally onto the suggestions that we might consider in the short term. I recommend that reviewers are encouraged to use reporting guidelines to guide their review. There was some success with that in the past and it might be something that we should guide our novices towards using. Running reviewer workshops alongside conferences, I know that works very successfully here and is very sought after. Raising awareness of what support is available for our peer reviewers, perhaps having just a standard link that goes into the bottom of letters of invitation directing people towards where they might find resources. Making it easier to make reviewer selections, as an editor I am very aware that often when I select reviewers based on their profile in the SAGE/JDR archives but that this has perhaps not been updated for many years and they may have completed it when they first submitted a paper for publication to the journal early in their career. However, when requests are sent out to people to update the profile, in an already busy world, it is another bit of time that they have to dedicate with no tangible benefit to them. Perhaps at journals' stalls in the Exhibition Hall and other at other conferences we might think about having a computer and invite people that come to visit the stalls to update their profiles there and then. Encouraging new authors to be reviewers, using this idea of reciprocity. Perhaps a statement of request to peer review might be included in the acceptance letter that we send out to authors when their paper is accepted for publication might be received well. The authors will be feeling positive about the journal at this time and might be consider being a peer reviewer, appreciating the importance that peer review played in their manuscript acceptance.

In the longer term, I strongly feel that starting early in the dental school curriculum to engage clinicians in research and increasing their research awareness is a very positive thing, not least

because it certainly broadens the perspective that people have on the different types of research that are available. It also makes them aware of the different issues with different types of research because if someone specialises very soon in a particular area they can become very narrow in their focus with peer review and not really appreciate some of the breadth of problems that exist. I have also suggested partnering and this is something that has been spoken about at previous symposia, the idea that schools in developed countries can lend their expertise or their resources to partner schools in developing countries to improve research training. I think consideration should be given to developing a one-stop shop where we keep all these training resources for the oral and dental journals in one place or with one link so that we can simply send that to our peer reviewers. Also editors might consider reducing wastage through cascade reviewing and maximising the resources of the people that we already have and perhaps this innovative idea that there is a very real credit and reward associated with peer reviewing, I haven't of course touched on the financial side of that in this talk. My last recommendation is to say that I feel we should really continue working together, just as we are today and that the series of these symposia that Ken has brought together has been very useful and does begin to get us talking together as one big group about what we might do to share resources and minimise redevelopment of the same thing over and over again. Thank you very much.

Chair

Nicola I would thank you very much, an excellent start, I think that there is so many topics there we might want to discuss but please hold your questions until all the presenters have made their presentations and then we can bring up points. It is now my great pleasure to welcome Professor Balaji and to invite him to give his presentation on how to guide deans and teachers.

Professor S.M.Balaji

Thank you Ken. Good morning, when Professor Ken asked me to talk on the subject of how to approach Deans and teachers to help, I told him that I have never been a Dean. I will be giving a perspective from India and will explain what the problems are when we try to reach the publication

standards of Australasia, the USA and Western Europe. I am sure there must be many Deans present in this room from the United States and from other parts of the world. I hope that my recommendations won't hurt anyone. As you all know India is a totally different country, a land of unity and diversity and we have more than 300 dental schools and whatever the reports, whatever the citations in the past, at present, as you will see from this slide, we have a long way to go. In 1993, Indian dentists published 30 manuscripts in PubMed/Medline listed journals, accounting for 0.4% all of dental publications that year. In 2013, Indian dentists published 1,055 articles contributing to 7.8% of the world dental production but only 75 of these 1,055 manuscripts were cited. This is a great worry. Academia stresses the importance of getting published in high quality journals. My next slide is another important slide, kindly go through it. It shows the acceptance rate of selected Indian dental journals, in the year 2014. Although it includes some estimates, it paints a clear overall picture. The acceptance rate of Indian dental journals which are indexed with PubMed/Medline ranged from 9% to 39%. You can see here this Indian journals, certain non indexed with PubMed and others not. The acceptance rate in PubMed indexed journals was 9% to 35% while in non indexed journals it was between 9% and 65%. The mean acceptance rate for indexed journals was 16.4% and for non indexed it was 34.91%, this difference is quite significant. What can be deduced from this? It is that the overall acceptance rate is low. The magnitude of the problem becomes more apparent when you consider that India has 300 dental schools, some 200 of which provide postgraduate courses. There are more than 8,000 dental teachers and 300 principle Deans, 5,000 professors and associate professors and 3,000 junior level lecturers and more than 30,000 students and yet in 2010 they only produced 1185 published papers.

So how can both the production of papers and their acceptance rate be increased? The current situation is that there is no emphasis on the need for a structured teaching of research methodology at either undergraduate or postgraduate level. It is barely taught for a handful of hours, which is not sufficient to enable students to carry out supervised research. There is also a requirement for dentists to publish in order to obtain promotions, tenures, etc. and not because they have a passion that they have something very exciting to share with the world. It has become mere exercise to publish, a

practice that has been followed in words, not in spirit. In addition, no public funding is available for the 8,000 plus teachers to undertake research. The few teachers who know to perform structured research are not mentoring enough students. In practice, we just do complimentary research copying what is being done in the West. An analogy would be: when Newton described gravity in terms of an apple dropping, most of us would use an orange instead of an apple, the emphasis being on the orange and comparison with apple not gravity. We show a lack of originality and innovation, and this, plus the other factors that I have described, means little basic research is undertaken and the poor presence of Indian dental research in high impact journals.

So how can Deans and teachers help? To change their mindset, a radical approach is needed. The Deans and teachers must evolve and change. India has a huge dental workforce, an expanding knowledge base, all Deans are in a good position to collaborate, with most occupying key positions. Thus there is the potential for change. Our people need to be ready to seize and use the opportunity. Also the burden of diseases, particularly the non-communicable and lifestyle diseases, is at an all time high. Hence there are plenty of reasons to change the curriculum and to give research a far higher profile. One step is to introduce journal clubs, which can be a tool. Initially, everyone needs to be taught about the nuance of reading, appreciating and critically reviewing a manuscript. Unless they know what is right or wrong they cannot learn to distinguish the right from the wrong, also this will create a lifelong learning process to stimulate the cycle of research. The Deans and the teachers need to support the research and create a conducive environment and not to deter interest and enthusiasm. Even small research projects need to be applauded and encouraged and promoted. Allocation of funds is a crucial process for this to happen.

Students need to be taught to mentor their peers and more junior students and probably service buddies to mentor and promote them. Short term shadowing opportunities with leading researchers or in laboratories can be given to interested students, they should be taught and assist in detail in the domains of ethics and statistics. Accountability needs to be created, the students need to be taught scientific writing. As English is not a first language for most Indians, it is crucial that

develop sufficient skills in written, scientific English. Changes in the attitude of existing Deans or the appointment of new ones is required. I hope that I don't hurt anybody by putting up this slide.

Traditionally, in India, as in the past in the West, a Dean is the corporate boss. They have unlimited powers and access and have unchallenged authority. They have power to over-rule and the Dean's wish becomes the rule. I suggest that, in India, dental Deans need to become a part of the research team, be a responsible leader who lives by example and contributes equally rather than enjoying all privileges at the cost of the others.

Next is a systematic vision. It is very important, to enable Deans and teachers to have a macro vision, with goals to improve the situation, and their institutions and also a micro level vision with goals and missions for each of their departments. These should be shared with both staff and students and both of these groups motivated to achieve them. The teachers should ensure that these are understood by students and that the students become a part of the system and not just a beneficiary of the system. In this model there can be no silent spectators, only active participants. Everyone needs to be a contributor, a learner or a teacher in his own right. All the stakeholders need to be involved in creating a network and avenues of actions. To accomplish the goals, they need to stimulate the domino effect at all levels so that mass movements of research and scientific fever are present throughout the campus. This can be accomplished if and only when the wrong notions which influence beliefs, attitudes and values are corrected, elements of mistrust need to be managed and eliminated especially those between all powerful authorities. Strong relationship will create a batch of motivated, contributing researchers. Deans and teachers need to improve these factors.

Besides this deans and teachers need to develop cognition on subjects skills, knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, writing and self evaluating. Most importantly, they also need skills in team working, accepting and handling the strengths and weaknesses of the team members, assuming responsibility, being accountable, valuing and collaborating, organising skills, developing leadership qualities and performing the SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and the Threat) analysis. Together the team needs to be motivated to produce excellent research and to

publish more and to value and create good supporting networks. All this will require the use of trainers to train the students and also the staff and Dean to bring about the changes. The public need to be made aware that the changes are to help Indian dentists provide better care. In this context social media can help to inform the population so that the dentists become well known in their immediate community not only as capable dentists but also as excellent researchers and key opinion leaders.

Teach to enable faculty and students to review papers. The programme to achieve this should also teach how to help colleagues critically review manuscripts, whether self written, or written by others, and to be precise and concise in expression of thoughts, develop a clear picture and develop a rewards system for all research academics, both in terms of finance, social standing and tenure. Deans and teachers, need to work together to create a sense of belonging, a brand value of research and to keep their team united and motivated. The social and financial obligations need to be addressed by a series of short and long term goals. However, such a policy should not create a situation where a student hunts for opportunity to profit from unworthy pursuits but at the same time should be sufficiently funded to enable good research to be performed.

Thank you so much.

Chair

Well Bala thank you very much for a thought provoking presentation and I remember it in Cape Town and I thanked you for being so honest and I think that I will do the same again. Although you were referring to India, I know and many of us in the audience are aware that the problems are common in other countries as well. So I think again there is potential to have a lot of discussion on the points that you have raised after the other presentations have been given. Well it is now time to hear from the publishers, so Courtney would you like to come and give your presentation please.

Courtney Pugh

Thank you and welcome. As Ken mentioned I am with SAGE Publications and I am a publishing editor. SAGE publish the Journal of Dental Research on behalf of IADR and AADR. Thank you very much for allowing us to attend and participate in this great event today.

First, I am going to go into sharing some tips in improving the quality of the publishing process from the publishers perspective, things that we can do to help you all with the process, otherwise referred to in the business as how to avoid the rejection. Before I dive into specific tips and overall processes I would like to first call attention to the top four reasons that publishers have defined as reasons why authors choose a given title to publish in, the first of course is journal rank or impact factor. Where the journal stands against its competition and where it is indexed are generally the most important factors of where to publish, as it has implications for tenure applications as well as grants. Overall prestige of the title, this is often tied to the longevity of a publication, how long it has been in existence. If the journal concerned has been published for three or four years you may think “is this journal going to be around for the next decade?” As well as if you are a member of a society like IADR, AADR you may feel a kinship and be more interested in publishing in your society’s publication. The aims and scopes of a journal are also critical, is your paper appropriate for the focus of this journal, also the audience in both the make-up and the size of an audience you trying to attract with your research. Finally, open access is a driving motivation for many authors with funding requirements, especially for papers from Europe and the UK, many authors are seeking out gold open access journals or those that provide an open access option, in order to comply with grant requirements and then others are just interested from more of an altruistic point of view and the dissemination of research.

As a publisher, SAGE has looked to provide authors, reviewers and editors with more tools to improve the submission process, electronic submission sites allow you to track your manuscript through its process. So if you feel like that it has been a week and you still haven’t heard back about your manuscript, you can log in and see exactly where it is in the overall process, being assigned

reviewers and have the opportunity to follow up with the editorial office if it seems it is taking an undue length of time. The nice benefit on the editors side or for the editorial office, of course, is that the site keeps historical records and the reviews that you have had, if you have had multiple revisions, we can look at that data and access it, which is quite handy for associate editors as well to reflect on. It is quite common to have questions as you prepare your submission but surprisingly many people don't think to reach out to the publisher or to the editorial office, prior to preparing that submission to the journal, to address any of those questions that you might have as you have gone through the manuscript guidelines. This unfortunately leads to rejection or immediate return of your paper for not following instructions for authors. I will get into some more specific reasons in a moment as to why you should reach out and ask those questions and really avoid the desk reject. At SAGE they work directly with editors to provide them with the latest in industry standards and best practices around guidelines and ethics, getting back to Nicola's point about providing tools, training and resources. These tools also help authors themselves as well as reviewers ensure that they are following the highest quality and ethical standards and that it is maintained throughout the entire publishing process from preparing your submission, to the review to the final publication and any post publication review that might be done. We all want to avoid retractions and corrections to those final publications and so it is really important that we manage all of this in the front end of the process.

Getting back to those reasons why you might be desk rejected, now if you are unfamiliar with that term essentially it means that your paper has been rejected prior to being sent out to review. So the editor or the associate editors have taken a look at it and they feel that there are inadequacies. Common reasons are that: the language is poor, there are a lot of grammatical mistakes and spelling mistakes, perhaps it's not in the correct style, the references don't match up and so the pre-review is a critical point. There are a lot of services and tools out there available to help you in that pre submission step. SAGE has a language services section where we help authors make those kinds of corrections ahead of the submission. The next is ethics, plagiarism unfortunately is a huge problem in our industry, the Journal of Dental Research for example does check every single paper prior to sending it to review against iThenticate which is a programme developed by Crosscheck to ensure that the papers that they

are sending to review, and potentially accepting, don't have any issues with plagiarism. Duplicate publications are also an issue as well as some other aspects of Independent Review Board (IRB) approval and making sure that you are following the ethical research guidelines. Finally, one of the most common reasons and Nicola touched on this briefly, is that papers might get a desk reject is appropriateness. The paper is not an overall great fit for the journal and in looking at it the paper is too clinical for this research journal or it is too basic science for that clinical journal and so it is really important if you are not sure to take advantage of that pre submission query opportunity and to ask the editorial office: can you take a look at this abstract, do you feel that this is appropriate for publication in your journal. This prevents you wasting the time for your fellow authors in waiting around to get that review or that potential rejection, so that you can move on and find the journal that is most appropriate for you.

Switching gears a little bit, focusing more on the review process, for those of you that might be unfamiliar with the main points, journals vary on the type of review that they conduct. Double blind and single blind are certainly the most common but there are some new journals where they do a cursory review for appropriateness, perhaps checking for plagiarism or language issues and then they publish the paper, the peer review is done post acceptance. This is usually done in the form of public commentary and feedback, *PLOS One* is probably the best example and most recognised that you might be familiar with that uses this kind of process. If a journal does not publicly state what kind of peer review they follow or what peer review policies they have in place it is, the onus is on the author and on the reviewers to find out what the journal does, how do I comply and encourage a sense of transparency. Transparency is really the key to improving quality and review.

Switching to the reviewers more specifically, we at SAGE, and I know of many other publishers, work with journal editors to create reviewer guidelines or specific FAQ's to help guide reviewers through a journal specific review process. We want to ensure that reviewers are using the same process and criteria in reviewing each and every manuscript to ensure consistency and to ensure that they are providing high quality constructive feedback to authors. You would be surprised how many

editors see reviews that come back saying that this is a good article, go ahead and accept it or a diatribe on how horrible these authors are, that is obviously not constructive and not helpful to the authors, it is not the kind of feedback that you would want if you were the author of that manuscript and so do unto others as you would want done to yourself.

Some other important points that authors should be aware of are: turnaround times, the delay from submission to first decision is the one that I am talking about specifically. New journals have begun posting this information on line allowing authors to have a sense of the average time it will take before a decision is made on their paper. Also the importance of key words should not be underestimated, many authors don't always realise that the key words that they supply at submission are the ones that are used to find appropriate reviewers to review their manuscript. They are the key words that appear on the journal website and in the case of JDR, those are quick search buttons that allow people to find other related content and they are also the ones that are sent, are displayed on *PubMed*. When a publisher sends your article through to *PubMed* for indexing, they only send the title, the authors names, the abstracts and the key words. So, unless it is an open access paper, your whole paper is not available in a *PubMed* database for researchers to type in any key word and potentially find your paper, they are only searching against the terms that you have supplied, so be sure that you are using the best key words from a user's perspective. This will increase both the discoverability of that accepted manuscript and to ensure that the most appropriate reviewers were selected during the pre-review process.

Most of the following points are all kind of behind the scene things and these are specific to processing at SAGE, it may vary from publisher to publisher but I think that for the most part these are pretty general. These are all things that publishers are specifically responsible for but I wanted to give you some insight into. At SAGE, they go through several layers of post acceptance processing of a manuscript prior to publication really to ensure that the high quality standards are maintained. Once a paper is received, it is sent to proof readers and copy-editors to check for references and style, most publishers these days do not do a complete grammatical check or rewrite of manuscripts, so please

ensure that you have taken care prior to submitting to the journal, in some cases the editor may have returned your manuscript with revision requests for you to edit for language. At each step of the production process, there are multiple staff members checking the manuscript to ensure that there are no errors introduced post acceptance into your paper. Then proofs are shared with both the author and editor to have a final quality check prior to publication. Several years ago, at SAGE specifically, conflict of interest and funding disclosure statements were added at the end of every article, even if there was nothing to disclose, again it is really important to maintain a high level of transparency for readers. In addition, many journals have also recently started publishing a statement of authorship. Many journals have collected this information in the past and over the years but it is not widely published with the article. Again focusing on the issue of transparency it is important for readers to know who did what and for the editors and reviewers to know that the authors listed on the paper did meet the ICMJE requirements for authorship. The ultimate goal with all the above items again is to really avoid retractions and corrections to the published manuscript.

Finally, I am just going to share some tips and please remember to ask for assistance whether you are a reviewer or an author. The first is reaching out to the editorial office, they are always your best bet if you have specific questions related to that journal ask, ask, ask, don't ever assume that the guidelines will be able to answer every question that you might have. As previously mentioned, journal or colleague mentorship is key, reach out to an editorial board member who might be serving at your institution or colleague that you may have met at conferences and ask them for some help. Look at community sites: there are a lot of sites out there that provide resources for both authors, tips on getting published, as well as reviewers as Nicola also mentioned in her slides. Publisher sites, come to SAGE if you are not really sure which journal is appropriate come and take a look at the 800 plus published and see which journal might be the best fit for you. If you are still not sure, then contact the customer service site and ask any questions that you might have. *Scholarone* is the site that SAGE uses for electronic submissions, they have a whole support resource and actually it is great, they have got web tutorials on every aspect of the entire process that you can watch in a little two minute clip on how to take care of the process. You can also ask SAGE or any of the journal editorial

office staff for support such as: what is my username and password, how do I log in and all those kinds of things. Finally, language and developmental editing services I think are key, even if you are an English language speaker I think that there is a lot to be gained in having a third party person taking a look at your manuscript to see if there are any improvements to be made.

Chair

Well Courtney thank you very much indeed for giving us a publisher's perspective and now for our final speaker.

Professor Eino Honkala

Thank you Ken for inviting me to take part in today's symposium. I can't really give an answer to the first title which Ken gave me so I will try to give an approach from the developing world. My first appointment as a professor was about 35 years ago, when the University of Kuopio, in Finland, seconded me to the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. I learned a lot there when working as a Coordinator for Academic activities in the Faculty of Dentistry in Muhimbili Medical Centre. In outline this presentation is about developing and developed countries and the international conferences, which we organised to help the development of a publishing tradition in these developing countries of East Africa, international networking, developing experienced researchers and those without resources and experience and then briefly about ethics.

A developing country is also called a "less developed country". It is a nation with a lower living standard, an under developed industrial base and low Human Development Index relative to other countries. There are a lot of criticism about the term "developing country", but of course it is commonly still used. All countries of course are developing. The developing countries are also defined by the World Bank. A few years ago the term caused some kind of fear as it was based on the income of the country. Then the International Monetary Fund (IMF) started categorising 156

countries according to income, export, diversification of industry and integration into global financial system. Based on the IMF classification, the European states have developed income and relatively they are very rich. In this situation, they should be able to support dental research in the developing world and Finland and its International Development Agency (FINNIDA) has performed a special task in this area.

A scientific conference is an excellent opportunity for experienced researchers to visit developing countries and see the real life in those countries with their colleagues there. Research co-operation between developed and developing countries requires two way communications. Abstracts of the conference are important in reporting the results of any research project. They contain no literature review, no discussion, no references, but abstracts will go through peer review. Researchers will get feedback to help them to write the discussion after the conference. There are clearly eminent experts in this area of conferences who are discussing with junior researchers and also with the researchers from the developing world. Abstracts are also available to other researchers. When we were working in Tanzania, we established the East and Southern African Section of the IADR and it is now a large IADR Division which includes 26 countries in Africa. It was established 35 years ago after the first conference and later on we published the proceedings of the first four conferences that took place in East Africa. These proceedings consisted of presentations by the invited key note speakers and the IADR abstracts. There was no money to send all our postgraduate students to conferences abroad and that is why we started to arrange these conferences in East Africa and therefore we got lots of senior researchers coming from United States and Europe to give their support, to research in East Africa.

International corporates and councils from the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which are really very wealthy ones but are considered as developing countries by WMF, can fund and have funded research. Since my appointment started in Kuwait in 1999, there has been government money through the Kuwait University for organising international conferences. The first one was arranged there in 1999 and we also published proceedings of this conference. Every second year we obtained funding from the Kuwait University, 100,000-200,000 US dollars, and we had the opportunity to invite

senior researchers and to have the local experts as well in these conferences. The proceedings of three conferences were published in our own internal medical journal (Medical Principles and Practice) and one conference proceedings was in the International Dental Journal and one in the Journal of Dentistry. They included presentations from the African and the Middle East countries. So the whole world then had a description of oral health in these regions. The distribution of African countries according to the economy is very special. The African and the Middle East region of IADR (AMER) has the highest number of countries with a low or middle economy. The latest African and Middle East symposium "GOHIRA in AMER" was financed by a IADR Regional Development Programme and it took place within the IADR Cape Town meeting. The Borrow Foundation donated travel grants to the task group members, who had an abstract to present in IADR GS. Almost 40 authors have been working on the papers that were presented are now published in an electronic supplement of *Advances in Dental Research* (2015;27(1):1-49). This publication was funded by IADR and the Borrow Foundation.

Finally, I would like to speak about ethics in research cooperation in developing countries. It requires that both parties will benefit and the benefits from rich countries can be altruistic ones. If people are doing real work then of course they know that the work is important and finally the whole world will benefit. It could be regarded as unethical to collaborate with another country, especially a developing country, without a local partner and to publish results without the local authors. How to get manuscripts accepted is a special problem for the researchers from a developing country. There are practical tips to guide authors, which we try to adapt in the developing world. They include: consult experienced researchers in planning the study, conduct the study carefully, analyse the results carefully, prepare manuscripts carefully, read the instructions of the journal carefully and act accordingly. The editors and the reviewers are fundamental to support good research and get it published.

Thank you very much.

Chair

Well thank you very much indeed Eino. Now we now have an open discussion and I invite the speakers to come to the table at the front of the hall. Well I think that there are a lot of interesting points raised, is there a question or comment or observation please?

Belal Ailment

So just to save time you said to submit the abstract at the start, for the editor to look through, is that something that you would encourage for those two or three journals before sending the entire paper in?

Courtney Pugh

I think that if you have looked through the manuscript guidelines, the focus, the aims and the scopes that are published on the site and you feel like you are really not sure whether or not your paper is a good fit for that journal, then yes I think that you should reach out to the editorial office and share your abstract and say is this appropriate or does this look appropriate for review at your publication, and then they can make a yes or no call as to whether or not they will accept your submission. There are some journal editors that will still tell you that they want to review your whole manuscript before they make that call but more and more editors are willing to just look at the abstract and determine whether or not it is an appropriate fit for the publication, but you should first look at the aims and scopes of the journal against your abstract to say yes this feels appropriate or not and if you really aren't sure then go and ask the editorial office.

Professor Ivor Chestnut(Cardiff University)

As I am sure the panel are aware the government in the United Kingdom have mandated that all recognisable published research has to be in open access format. Now when I go to publish a paper in open access journals I have to pay 1,500 British pounds, yet when I am asked to review papers for journals I am expected to do that on the basis of good will. So I would just like the panel to answer when will the publishers stop having their cake and eating it?

Chair

I think that we can ask each speaker in turn. I deliberately didn't touch on the question on payment for peer review because it is certainly a very thorny issue, there are in other fields the point of view that paying for peer review results in lower quality peer review because it is not done for altruistic reasons by the people that we would tend to want to but by people who would tend to seek a payment. On the other hand it is very clear that peer reviewers put a lot of time and effort into peer reviewing and I know that some journals will offer stipends to certain peer reviewers. For example to biostatisticians or the statistical reviewers who are much in demand from journals. The other reason that I steered away from this particular point was because I think it is a changing field at the moment. Especially with the landscape looking very different in the future with regard to open access for publication and fees being paid much more widely. So I can't offer you any answers I am afraid.

Courtney Pugh

I think you know that every journal's policy is different when it comes to reviewers, we certainly work with some journals that grant continuing education or CME, CE credits to reviewers for completing a review. This is seen as an in-between option of paying someone and the altruistic side. Frankly, I think that this can be kind of the best method in terms of providing some sort of payment to researchers. At SAGE specifically we do try to reward our reviewers who participate in the review process, we grant 60 days free access to any publication that they wish to have access to, as a thank you for reviewing a manuscript. The tide may change, there are groups like *Rubriige* out there that are looking to really revolutionise what is happening in peer review and it may trickle down and have a greater impact on the publishers and again, as more countries start to have mandates for open

access as the RCUK (Research Councils UK) mandate on open access has created that may cause a wider change.

Professor Eino Honkala

I am aware of one journal, *Medical Principles and Practice* that is based in the Middle East and pays reviewers, 75 dinars (250 US dollars) for reviewing manuscripts. It is about 20 years old and 10 years ago it didn't have impact factor. Today its impact factor is 1.113.

Chair

A couple of further points to make on the question of payment or recognition for peer reviewers. The first is that, as Nicola mentioned, there is an organisation called *Publons*. Has anybody heard of *Publons* before today? Did any of you get an email from them? (No hands went up). I am quite surprised as I got an email from them. I went to their website and there is actually an article in *Nature* about the *Publons* system. I have a lot of sympathy, as a peer reviewer, I would like to get paid because I am freelance, I don't have a salary from a university. However, as has been pointed out, there are other ways for an individual to benefit and one of these is having a recognised way for logging your peer reviews so that they can be presented if you are going for promotion or seeking a new job. I think that is an area which could well be formalised. Perhaps *Publons* may provide a way of doing that. The second point is a question. I don't know if any of you have had this experience, but occasionally I receive e-mails asking me to review something for a Government and offering me a fee up front and saying please can I send my bank account details. Has anybody come across? I think that is known as phishing, has that happened to anybody else? Ivor, it has happened to you, so within this whole topic there are some quite muddy waters which you have to be careful of. Have we another comment or question please?

Unidentified speaker

I am an independent consultant but I worked in editing along time ago. A number of years ago I helped write some guidelines for working with authors for a couple of journals and so when I am

reviewing papers now I always ask the editor how much they are willing to work with authors, as it really kind of focuses my comments. However, I know that all the journals are getting overwhelmed with papers now and so should I just stop asking that question, I just don't know how much editors are really working personally with authors anymore.

Chair

Thank you, I think that it very much depends on both the journal and the editor but generally speaking, because the goal is to try and get the best research published, I think that most of us are very willing to work with the authors to try and improve the standard of any paper that is submitted. If we think that it is a good quality, high impact paper, regardless of the flaws in terms of the language or perhaps if some further analysis is still needed, we will work with the author(s) to address these problems and produce a publishable paper. Some papers go back and forwards quite a number of times before they reach that stage.

Just to follow up I would certainly say that there are certain editors out there that really do see it as their mission to work with authors, especially new first time authors and students in improving their manuscript submissions. I think that reviewers shouldn't be asked to make language edits or substantial edits of anykind, that is not their job. It should be the job of the author with advice from the Editor or Associate Editor.

Professor Helen Worthington (University of Manchester) .

Thanks very much, I have a PhD student and would like to make an appeal to everybody, any editors in chief who are present in the audience. He (the PhD student) is going to send round a questionnaire asking about guidelines and things to do with each journal and I would be really grateful if everybody could fill the questionnaire in and return it. His name, which I am sure you will remember, is Fang and he is a Chinese guy and he is actually got the presidential studentship from Manchester University, across the university and so he is an outstanding student and it would be really helpful for his PhD if you could fill the questionnaires in. Thank you very much, thank you for letting me speak.

Professor Peter Mossey

I am Professor Peter Mossey from the University of Dundee in Scotland and I was really sad about Dr Balaji's comments on the publication rates and the acceptance rates. I have some experience of working in India and it must be a massive disincentive to young researchers who are trying to publish if your publication success rate is 16% or less. My experience in India is that there are excellent clinicians, some excellent researchers but a very poor infrastructure and until the conditions or the infrastructure improves the science will not improve and the publications will not improve. So it has to be addressed at that level, I will give you an example in my field, in cranial facial or cleft lip and palate, we have been working with the world community and the global oral health burden for the last decade, we still do not know the prevalence of cleft, lip and palate in India. No one in India can tell us the prevalence of cleft lip and palate and so until the infrastructure to improve epidemiology from the government down, improves you will not get the scientific data to enable you to produce high quality publications and at the end of the day all these journals will continue to increase their standards and their thresholds for publication. So that is the comment. Is there a solution? Well there is a solution, we need to work with you. When I say we, I am speaking for and on behalf of the IADR global oral health inequalities research network. We addressed this situation in Africa which was very similar. Plenty of young scientists producing Masters and PhD doctorate theses but they could not get the results published. They did some excellent work and needed the IADR expertise to help move good quality work from data to publication and I think that we must take responsibility to facilitate that process.

Professor S.M. Balaji

Thank you very much for your idea, I do agree with you but data for the prevalence of cleft lip and palate in India are available. It is 1 in 700, this is the latest data which I have gone through and cleft, cranio-facial treatment is very well developed in India. Not so long ago, there were various cleft patients coming to India to operate but now not many are allowed because there are many centres doing a good job. Thank you very much but if you go back to my slide what I said was the acceptance

rate in 2010 was different and what I compared was in 1993 when only 30 papers were published and 30 were cited and now approximately 1,200 are published and only 75 are cited. So I was referring to the quality of the material.

In developing countries, several countries don't have data concerning oral health or cleft prevalence or incident rates, and of course we can't expect those countries would be able to conduct representative surveys, they just can't do it. Of course if there are black areas in world map then these would help those countries to get as good data as possible from their own countries but it is out of the question to conduct representative epidemiological surveys, in most of the developing countries.

Chair

If there are no more questions there are two things I would like to say. The first thing is to give a big thank you to Proctor and Gamble who have sponsored this symposium and will be helping us with the production of the proceedings. I would like to recognise Lisa Sagle as the representative of Proctor and Gamble, a very big thank you for your help. Now looking to the future I hope that these annual symposia are useful and we shall plan future events again. Thank you very much for your attendance.

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